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C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 000496

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MR](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON PRESIDENT-ELECT AZIZ

Classified By: Ambassador Mark M. Boulware for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Ambassador Boulware called on President-elect Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz to say that the USG accepted the Constitutional Council's determination that Aziz had been elected and was not persuaded that opposition complaints of major electoral irregularities were convincingly supported. The President-elect said he would treat the opposition respectfully and that his priorities were those he outlined in the election \* fighting poverty, corruption and extremism. Ambassador said these were initiatives we would seek to support. End summary.

12. (C) The evening of July 26, Ambassador Boulware called on President-elect Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. Ambassador recalled that the USG had earlier stated that it would await the decision of Mauritania's Constitutional Council before taking a position on the presidential election and that we accepted the Council's July 23 determination that Aziz had been elected. Ambassador observed that although the USG was mindful of opposition complaints of electoral irregularities, these were not convincingly supported by either the findings of international observers or of party representatives and other national officials present at polling places. Ambassador nonetheless urged forbearance in dealing with the opposition in order to ease tensions and promote reconciliation. President-elect Aziz assured the Ambassador that he had no desire to be drawn into conflict with the opposition that could only detract from addressing other urgent priorities.

13. (C) Aziz thanked Ambassador Boulware for the visit and for sharing the USG's conclusions about the elections. He said that he recognized that the USG's opposition to the coup d'Etat of August 2008 had been a principled position based on a U.S. view of the Abdallahi's governments' performance and commitment to democracy that Aziz and others had not shared. He hoped that this election would permit the resumption of more normal relations. Aziz noted that for his part he was ready to cooperate across the board. Ambassador said that the USG did look forward to working with his government to assist Mauritania in facing the many challenges before it. He noted that a public statement to that effect should be forthcoming but also cautioned that addressing the prohibition on economic assistance could take some time as it involved Presidential action.

14. (C) The President-elect expressed his personal condolences for the murder of AmCit Christopher Leggett observing that he remained absolutely committed to confronting Al Qaeda and hoped that security cooperation could continue and even expand. Ambassador expressed thanks for the condolences and noted that the GIRM's cooperation in the wake of the murder had been very welcome. Ambassador

agreed that there was growing concern with the security situation in the region and not only by the USG. He said that we remained very interested in security cooperation and would be open to increasing our engagement on that front.

15. (C) Aziz said that he was aware that effectively responding to the threat of extremism would require more than military force alone. He said that he was determined to live up to the engagements he had made during the campaign to address public corruption, to fight poverty and to offer Mauritania's youth hope for the future. Aziz claimed that he was victorious because he convincingly articulated these themes and average Mauritania's responded. He said that his election marked a generational change and that the old guard that had dominated Mauritanian politics for decades was passing from the scene. Nonetheless, he said that he would treat opposition figures with due respect. Ambassador replied that the priorities he identified were also areas of interest to Mauritania's development partners including the USG and that we would be prepared look for ways to support serious efforts by the GIRM to tackle these challenges.

16. (C) Comment: Relaxed and at ease in his temporary office in a commercial building, Aziz came across as sincere and open. He is saying the kinds of things Mauritania's traditional development partners want to hear but skepticism remains. French Ambassador Vandepoorter, who called on Aziz the same day, had told Ambassador that he would deliver a congratulatory letter from President Sarkozy that was fairly directive in nature. While Aziz, electoral victory will allow normal relations with Mauritania, rebuilding donor enthusiasm for its democracy project will likely take time and require convincing action on the GIRM's part.

BOULWARE